

## 14 Cosmopolitanism at the crossroads

### Swedish immigration policy after the 2015 refugee crisis

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#### **Introduction: game change?<sup>1</sup>**

Sweden's reputation and self-image as a country of international solidarity and liberal universalism has been cultivated by Swedish governments for more than half a century through peace-building, international cooperation, development, and foreign aid. This trademark has also been influential in Sweden's comparatively open and liberal approach to migration and refugees. It is reflected in an immigration policy that prioritizes humanitarian needs over national self-interest and profitability, and in a multicultural membership policy that prioritizes voluntary integration and social inclusion over forced assimilation and deservingness. Together, these policies have led to a rapid diversification of Swedish society, from a fairly homogeneous country to one of the most diverse in Europe. Prime ministers from left to right have heralded this Swedish model of immigration as a success story. It serves both the 'cosmopolitan' ends of hospitality and refuge, and the national ends of domestic development and prosperity (cf. Schall 2016).

In 2015, the European refugee crisis provided a crucial test of the model. The horrors of the civil war in Syria and affected regions generated the largest displacement of people in Europe since the end of World War II. In the course of one year, roughly one million people migrated to the EU, most of whom were asylum-seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's social democratic-green government, which entered office in 2014, vowed to maintain the strong cosmopolitan commitments of previous governments. The refugee crisis engaged all levels of Swedish society. Questions of numbers and costs were for a long time discarded as irrelevant, and dissenting views were rejected as xenophobic. In September 2015, the Prime Minister declared: 'My Europe does not build walls' (Löfven 2015).

With time and growing numbers of asylum-seekers, however, the general opinion began to sway. In 2015, Sweden registered 163,000 asylum applications. In the peak months of September and October, 10,000 new asylum-seekers came every week. Reports of over-burdened migration offices and welfare institutions called into question the feasibility of the cosmopolitan model. The collapsing asylum policy of the EU through the bailout of other

member states left the ‘moral super powers’ Sweden and Germany to fend for themselves. In a cruel twist of fate Prime Minister Löfven found himself forced to stop immigration precisely because the numbers of immigrants were so high that the government considered the existing policy unsustainable. The decision was announced in a press conference on November 24 2015 (Löfven and Romson 2015). Torn by moral agony, Löfven and his Vice-Prime Minister Åsa Romson (who could not hold back the tears) presented a package of drastic restrictions. In the following months, the government implemented border controls that effectively limited the asylum-seekers’ possibility of reaching Swedish shores. It then moved to pass a temporary asylum law (2016) that narrowed the grounds for protection and for family reunification to the EU minimum. It also downgraded most residence permits from permanent to temporary. In May 2019, the Swedish government proposed a two-year extension of the temporary asylum law – with a restored right to family reunification – which is currently pending in parliament.

What do these changes mean? Are we witnessing the break-up of the Swedish model of immigration? This chapter tries to shed some light on this question by examining Swedish immigration policy pre- and post-2015. While it is too early to either confirm or discard a paradigmatic shift of immigration policy, I will bring out and discuss tendencies that may indicate long-term change towards a more nation-centered politics of immigration. The argument unfolds in the following way. In the first of the following three sections, I describe the Swedish model and explain in what ways it was/is cosmopolitan. In the second, I examine indications of change from cosmopolitan to national values and priorities, relatively speaking. In the third and last section, I briefly discuss whether this shift constitutes a crisis of values or realities.

### **Swedish cosmopolitanism**

The term ‘cosmopolitan’ derives from the Greek words ‘cosmos’ for ‘world’ and ‘polites’ for ‘citizen.’ Cosmopolitans are world citizens and cosmopolitanism, by inference, is the ideology/theory that seeks to create and strengthen the bonds of fellow citizenship throughout humanity. While the content and thickness of this bond may vary, its universal relevance may not. It denies moral legitimacy to the division of humanity into separate communities, creeds, and tribes. Cosmopolitanism relies both on the principle of individualism, in as much as the ultimate unit of concern is the person (not the group or collective), and the principles of universalism and generality, in as much as all persons are viewed as equals regardless of nationality, gender, skin color, socioeconomic class and, so on (Pogge 1992).

It goes without saying that ‘pure’ cosmopolitanism is a utopian ideal that has never been realized. Cosmopolitanism is commonly invoked to criticize and question, and to propose more humane policies and practices. More

often than not, the goal is to attenuate and transform national loyalties, so that governments and people will be more tolerant of strangers and diversity. It is best thought of as an ideal that can be approximated but never reached, especially in a system of sovereign nation-states where solidarity with strangers tends to be secondary to that of co-nationals. *Moral* cosmopolitans seek to strengthen the horizontal bond between fellow human beings through education and tolerance (cf. Nussbaum 1997), while *political* cosmopolitans try to strengthen the vertical bond between world citizens and a global regime of individual rights that governments have to protect (cf. Benhabib 2004). States may impose such cosmopolitan obligations on themselves, or through treaties with other states. The cosmopolitan law may also, of course, be imposed upon states by a supranational sovereign or world government, but cosmopolitans have traditionally been skeptical of such concentration of power, regarding it as conducive to new forms of imperialism.

Mobility and migration matter to moral cosmopolitanism because they open the mind and make people more tolerant. They matter to political cosmopolitans partly for the same reason, but also for the sake of global equality and because they create obligations for states, especially with respect to people in need. The most well-known of these is Immanuel Kant's idea of *hospitality*, or the right to *sojourn* (Kant 1991). Let us start there and see how it applies to Sweden.

### *Hospitality and the progressive dilemma*

Kant believed that people, *qua* human beings, have a shared claim to all parts of the globe, and that this gives them a right of limited access to the territories of states in which they are not citizens/nationals. This right is not as strong and absolute as that of citizens, but strong enough to limit government discretion over entry and exit (Kant 1991). To him, this right was primarily a means to facilitate cross-national mobility and civil association with others, but it also applied to migrants seeking refuge, and this is arguably his most important contribution to modern theories and legislation on migration and asylum (Kant 1991; Benhabib 2004).

Hospitality is often thought of as an act of generosity rather than something that is owed. In Kant's thinking, however, states have an obligation to offer migrants sojourn so long as it does not threaten the states' self-preservation, especially if denying it would result in the migrants' 'destruction.' (This condition is directly reflected in the Geneva Convention's principle of *non-refoulement*.) The migrant, on the other hand, has an obligation not to abuse the hospitality of the host by staying longer than needed. Kantian hospitality is not a defense of open borders and freedom of settlement, but a (qualified) right to associate with people in other states and to get protection from other states (Kant 1991). While this conception of cosmopolitanism offers a strong and influential defense of the right to asylum, it does not offer

any clear guidelines on how to balance the state's right to self-preservation against the principle of non-refoulement, or the burdens of hospitality against the needs of the refugees. When does immigration become a threat to the state's right to self-preservation? And when is it safe for migrants to be sent home?

From this perspective, immigration policies operate in a tension between two values, hospitality and self-preservation. The greater the hospitality to immigrants, the stronger the cosmopolitanism; the greater the concern for the state's self-preservation, the stronger the nationalism. The defense of strong cosmopolitanism takes into account not only basic human needs such as safety and survival, but also egalitarian ideals of social justice and fair universal distribution of material resources. To such cosmopolitans, freedom of movement and settlement are causally connected with the right to equal opportunities (Carens 1987 and 2013; Pogge 2008; Tan 2004). The defense of national self-preservation, on the other hand, often relies on the national embeddedness of democratic institutions and social welfare arrangements. Proponents of liberal nationalism argue that democratic participation and accountability, distributive justice and social equality, presuppose a shared national (cultural) identity that fosters and legitimizes trust and reciprocity among citizens (Canovan 2005; Miller 2016; Walzer 1983; Östbring 2019).

Swedish immigration policy has approximated the cosmopolitan end of this duality in at least two ways. Firstly, through criteria of the need for protection of refugees that widely exceeds those stipulated in the Geneva Convention. Since the 1960s, Sweden has offered asylum to war refusers and deserters, and to so-called *de facto* refugees, i.e. people who do not qualify as refugees under the convention despite suffering severe harassment and discrimination on political ground by the authorities in their homeland. The 1976 Foreigner Law codified Sweden's responsibility to offer these two groups protection. Since the 1980s, an increasingly important ground for protection has been 'humanitarian reasons.' Migrants with physical or mental disabilities belong to this group, as do migrants fleeing conflict that does not target them specifically, but makes it dangerous for them to return. The 1989 Foreigner Law formally recognized humanitarian reasons as a valid ground for protection (Lundh and Ohlsson 1994, Johansson 2005). Furthermore, a generous policy of family reunification has accounted for almost 50% of the immigration in the 1980s and 1990s, and almost 40% in the 2000s (Dahlstedt 2017). A temporary and notable restriction was made in late 1989 through the 'Lucia decision,' limiting asylum only to refugees who met the requirements of the Geneva Conventions. Since the late 1990s, however, immigration policy has moved in an increasingly liberal (cosmopolitan) direction with increasing numbers of immigrants. In the years between 2006 and 2017, Sweden had the highest rate of asylum applications per capita in the EU-28, and a 50% approval rate (Eurostat 2018). Additionally, the 2008 labor market immigration law is completely demand-

driven, and enables employers to recruit directly from third countries (as long as contracts are announced domestically and general rules regarding social rights and minimum wages are met). According to the OECD, Sweden now has the most open labor migration system of the OECD countries (Emilsson 2016).

Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly, the Swedish model combines a moral defense of cosmopolitanism with a pragmatic/causal argument for immigration. While the moral defense relies on the self-image of an altruistic community that stands up for humanitarian values, the pragmatic argument suggests a causal relation between immigration and national progress. This match between the moral obligation to hospitality and the pragmatic benefit of immigration is often repeated in public discourse, for instance in this governmental declaration by Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt:

One of the most Swedish things we have is our tradition of openness to the rest of the world. Generations of people who have fled persecution and poverty have been given a chance to start a new life in Sweden. They have enriched our country, made us wiser, and given us a more developed society. They contribute to our prosperity. Without this openness, Sweden would have been a poorer country.

(Reinfeldt 2010)

The ‘progressive dilemma’ between humanitarian immigration laws and generous social welfare arrangements that preoccupy many academics and practitioners (Goodhart 2004; Ruhs & Martin 2008), including several cosmopolitans, tends to be reduced or denied altogether in the Swedish model. Unlike many other ‘immigration-friendly’ countries, such as Canada and New Zealand, Sweden does not have an elaborate selection (‘points’) system for picking the most desirable and profitable migrants. And, unlike other social-egalitarian societies with universal welfare systems, like Denmark, Sweden has not restricted immigration for reasons of self-preservation. Somewhat simplified, Swedish cosmopolitanism is presented and defended as a win-win, morally justifiable and self-serving at the same time.

### ***Postnational membership***

Cosmopolitanism is not just a question of entry and temporary sojourn, but of residence and membership. Although first admission is often intended as a question of temporary stay (guest worker systems, refugee camps), it often develops into permanent settlement. As migrants ‘set roots’ in the host society and develop social attachments through work, education, civic commitments, and so on, at some point these social attachments should translate into formal membership (cf. Carens 2013). Nation-centered conceptions of membership have traditionally viewed such attachments as a question of singular and sacred loyalties to one community (Brubaker 1992), which

means that inclusion is a long and arduous process that requires cancellation of previous attachments. Cosmopolitan conceptions of membership, on the other hand, embraces the plurality of attachments and seek ways of formally recognizing them in rights and status. Especially important in this regard is the 'post-national void' that emerges when people live 'between' and/or not completely in one national community.

In a world of increasing mobility and migration, it seems that post-national voids are growing in number, size, and importance. The post-national condition, as Jürgen Habermas (2001) has called it, applies most acutely to migrants, especially the stateless, displaced, and persecuted people – i.e. persons to whom citizenship offers nothing or very little in terms of security. Their vulnerability in a world of nation-states derives from their lack of effective membership, and their lack of membership denies them 'the right to have rights,' in Hannah Arendt's (1973) oft-cited phrase. Cosmopolitanism seeks ways of filling this void by ensuring rights that do not presuppose nationality, although the enforcement and protection of such (human) rights tends to rely on states. A cosmopolitan national society, then, is a society that offers alternative and extensive membership and rights to residents who are not nationals (yet).

Post-national membership can be described as cosmopolitanism applied to a world that is not cosmopolitan in power structure and organization. It applies both to the material elements of membership, status and rights, and to the immaterial ones, identity (cf. Joppke 2010). In the first respect, cosmopolitanism implies the creation of an alternative membership that approximates or even equates citizenship in terms of utility and provisions (cf. Soysal 1994). The stronger the connection between rights and residence, the more cosmopolitan the state.

Swedish immigration policy displays clearly cosmopolitan traits in this regard. Like many other immigration countries, Sweden underwent a process of liberalization between the 1970s and 1990s, by which a monolithic container for national rights gradually opened and became accessible to migrants (cf. Hammar 1990; Soysal 1994; Spång 2011). Sweden differs from most other countries in two respects, however. First, the degree of this expansion went further than in most other countries and included, among other things, the right of denizens (i.e. migrants with permanent residence) to vote and run for office in all elections apart from the national parliament, facilitated naturalization through the abandonment of integration and language criteria, and full acceptance of dual citizenship. Second, unlike most other European countries, Sweden did not experience a civic turn of restrictions on residence and citizenship in the 2000s, but remained faithful to a postnational membership model that is often ranked as the most immigrant-friendly in Europe (Fernández 2019; Goodman 2010; Jensen et al. 2017; MIPEX 2015).

In the second respect, cosmopolitanism implies a re-invention or re-configuration of national identity for the purposes of diversifying the population. To Jürgen Habermas, a key proponent of this idea, it involves stripping

nationhood of ethnic undertones, and replacing it with a civic (post-ethnic) conception of the national community. And, it involves disrupting the conflation of majoritarian national culture with the general culture that prevails in the public sphere of politics, business, and civil society (Habermas 2001; 1997). This reconstrual of nationality and nationhood is vital, according to Habermas, because it creates a political culture that is equally inclusive and relevant to all people of society (cf. Pogge's principle of universalism above), and in this sense compatible with immigration, diversity, and political equality (Habermas 1998). Habermas famously connects postnationalism with the ideal of 'constitutional patriotism.' By this he means a patriotism that is expressed through strong popular loyalty to nothing more, and nothing less, than the (universal) norms and values incorporated in a democratic constitution, and its civic political culture and symbols (Habermas 2001, although see Müller 2008 for an alternative, non-cosmopolitan conception). But postnational identity can also mean the deregulation of the nation as a source of political loyalty and relevance. In this version, the nation is reduced to an ethnic community among others in the state, with no claim to over-riding moral and political significance.

I have elsewhere (Fernández 2019) referred to this 'privatization of the nation' as a description that captures the particularities of the Swedish case. It implies on the one hand a form of secularization, whereby the nation, relatively speaking, becomes irrelevant as a source of public identity and legitimacy. Instead, the nation is construed and practiced as a private and voluntary community (much like religious congregations), which rarely lends itself to state sponsored celebrations. On the other hand, privatization of the nation also implies greater fluidity and openness of membership and belonging. It construes citizenship as malleable and open-ended; a bond which is negotiated and re-negotiated by natives and immigrants together, as it were. This notion of membership can be illustrated with the following statement by Ulrika Messing, Minister of Integration in 2000 when the law on dual citizenship was passed:

There is not just one way of being Swedish, but many. Nor is Swedishness something unchangeable. It is continually shaped and reshaped. It develops in encounters with other cultures. Therefore, it is important that we turn Swedish citizenship into an open arena for encounters across ethnic and cultural borders, and that we all participate in shaping the new Swedishness.

(Messing 2000)

This notion of citizenship combines a normative ideal of postnational openness with a causal/empirical claim that integration works best when it is voluntary. Citizenship is not an end goal or a reward, but a means that serves the many purposes of the postnational society. It should be designed

to accommodate the multiple affiliations and connections that Swedish residents have, and to reduce inequalities between members with different legal status (Fernández 2019; Gustafsson 2002; Schall 2014; Spång 2007).

## Signs of change

So far, I have tried to show in what ways the Swedish model of immigration approximates a cosmopolitan position with respect to entry and membership. The image is obviously very simplified and condensed, and it brushes over variations between more restrictive and more open phases, as well as points of divergence and disagreement between policy-makers and stakeholders. Still, the aim is not to narrate the history of Swedish immigration policy, but to identify defining (cosmopolitan) elements and examine if they are changing as an effect of the refugee crisis. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the second part of that aim, signs of change. I will discuss three: the return of the progressive dilemma, the new right-left cleavage of party politics, and the re-nationalization of membership.

### *The return of the progressive dilemma*

One could argue that the Swedish refugee crisis began in the late summer of 2014, one month before the national election. Prime Minister Reinfeldt had built his political career by uniting the center-right parties of the 'Alliance' while maintaining the *cordon sanitaire* that separated the ascending right-wing populist Sweden Democrats from all the other parties of the parliament. On August 16, he gave a typical campaign speech in all respects but one. Reinfeldt included an unusually emotive plea to the Swedish people to 'open their hearts' to the increasing numbers of refugees that would come and seek asylum in Sweden. It was an unusually candid appeal for tolerance, patience, and solidarity, and an even more unusual and straightforward statement of the costs that refugee reception would entail. Reinfeldt unapologetically explained that admitting and accommodating migrants entitled to asylum would exhaust the room for other political reforms in coming years. Politicians who claimed differently were just lying or deluding themselves. In the long run, however, this was not just the right thing to do, but the best thing for Sweden (Reinfeldt 2014).

Reinfeldt's speech was a game changer. It acknowledged the tradeoff between a humanitarian immigration policy and public expenditure for progressive reforms. Although the intention was to motivate the Swedish people to rise to the occasion and be generous, it did not have that effect. Especially not on the voters of Reinfeldt's own party, the Conservatives (Moderaterna), which lost eight percent of its supporters from the previous election (2010) to the Sweden Democrats. The Conservatives lost more than a fifth of their voters (dropping from 30.1% to 23.3%), while the Sweden Democrats more than doubled their base (from 5.7% to 12.9%). Reinfeldt's speech changed



the conception of immigration: if an immaculate champion of Swedish cosmopolitanism could talk so openly about the financial burdens of refugee immigration, how could anyone convince the populace that no such tradeoff existed? Pundits from center to left spent the following months accusing Reinfeldt for playing straight into the hands of the populists – and for breaking a secret agreement not to talk about the cost of immigration (cf. Ulvenlöv & Gerdås 2014).

During the actual refugee crisis one year later, the dominating public narrative played on moral obligations and pride in the Swedish legacy of solidarity and openness. The crisis engaged all levels of society and the public image featured activists, volunteers and ordinary people doing Samaritan acts. Universities, sports clubs, and cultural organizations opened their doors to migrants with special talents and competence. A positive ‘all hands on deck’ mentality prevailed in the mainstream media (Dahlgren 2016). Gradually, however, this positive discourse was paralleled with another discourse on the public sector, which spoke of lagging welfare institutions, growing inequalities, and declining services for the elderly, the sick, and the unemployed. It is a well-established and very familiar discourse to most Swedes, albeit not one that usually connects with immigration. Rather it is treated as a separate preoccupation with the privatization, dismantling, and eroding quality of public services. In the fall of 2015, however, these two discourses became linked in a way that pitted refugee reception against schooling, housing, and health care for the native population (Dahlgren 2016; Krzyzanowski 2017).

The uniting of the two discourses was initially driven by the Sweden Democrats, of course, who advocated for helping refugees ‘in their own regions,’ a suggestion that the other parties regarded as crassly xenophobic. Yet, a statement in early October, 2015, by Hans Rosling, a philanthropist and esteemed professor of international health, seemed to support the idea of saving lives on site (in the regional refugee camps) as opposed to just concentrating on asylum in Europe (Rosling 2015). Other public pundits openly addressed the tradeoff between Sweden’s humanitarian asylum policy (hospitality) and the basic welfare functions of the state (national preservation). The provisional housing solutions for asylum-seekers – which ranged from expensive hotel accommodations and over-crowded apartments to simple camps in the countryside – fueled the general image of a situation spiraling out of control, socially as much as economically.

While many right-wing populists construed the situation as a choice between Us (Swedes) and Them (migrants), other parts of the political establishment viewed it as a problem of ‘administrative capacity.’ While Sweden officially remained loyal to its cosmopolitan ideals, the administrative challenges for the Migration Agency and various welfare institutions required support from other member states of the EU. In early November, 2015, Foreign Minister Margot Wallström stated that there were limits to how many refugees Sweden could welcome. At the same time, Prime

Minister Löfven made a formal request to the EU that some of the asylum-seekers in Sweden be divided between other countries (Dahlgren 2016). However, no such relief was offered. Later that month, when the drastic restrictions finally were announced, they were justified as a necessary but morally painful action to salvage the administrative functionality of the Swedish welfare state, not a prioritization of national interests over those of the refugees. If the welfare state ceased to function, everyone would lose, not just Swedish nationals. Although the progressive dilemma finally took its toll on the Swedish model, it was presented as an administrative shortcoming, not a nationalist backlash.

### *The new right-left cleavage*

The second sign of change is the growing emergence of a new right-left cleavage. The right-center coalition government that entered office in 2006 drove migration policy in an increasingly open, cosmopolitan direction with little opposition from the other parties, save the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats (SD). In fact, maintaining the cordon sanitaire between the growing populist party and the seven other parties was so important that it pushed the whole system to more and more postnational ends. Policies and vocabularies were modelled to signal anti-populism, anti-racism, and liberal humanitarianism. The term ‘volumes,’ for example, became branded as part of the SD vocabulary and was thereby off limits for anyone who did not want to be associated with xenophobia and ethnic nationalism. Former Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt instead spoke of the abundance of space in Sweden, and the country’s nearly unlimited capacity for refugee reception (Habul & Svensson 2014). The following social democratic-green government followed suit when it entered office in September 2014.

Unlike most other European countries, the Swedish populists have effectively been out-manoeuvred from power and influence by the other parties. Despite the SD’s growing electoral support since the early 2000s – 1.4% (2002), 2.9% (2006), 5.7% (2010), 12.9% (2014) and 17.5% (2018) – which has turned them into the country’s third biggest party, all the other parties from right to left have publicly sworn time and time again never to seek SD’s support, let alone invite them into government. With the refugee crisis, however, this cordon sanitaire starts to be questioned. Partly because of the SD’s continuous growth in the elections and opinion polls, partly because of the governments U-turn in migration policy in the fall of 2015. Because of the latter, a number of official truths and sacred principles regarding volumes, welfare state capacity, and integration, became questionable and openly contested. And, positions that previously had been reserved for the SD were now adopted by social democrats, moderates, and even the Green Party (Mp), the most cosmopolitan party of them all. It was as if the pre-2015 win-win immigration policy was just a bluff that had been exposed by the migration crisis.

The cracks in the wall first appeared within the center-right alliance that had been such a stable and cohesive bloc during the Reinfeldt administration (2006–2014). Slowly but surely, the four parties of the alliance – the Moderate Party (M), the Christian Democratic Party (KD), the Liberal Party (L), and the Center Party (C) – started drifting apart on the nationalism-cosmopolitanism axis, with the former two moving in a more nationalist direction and the latter two in the opposite. In January 2017, when the Moderates' party leader Anna Kinberg Batra announced that her party would consider negotiating with SD, especially to block the government's budget, it was a clear sign that the mainstream consensus on immigration was dissolving. One and a half year later, after the 2018 elections, her successor Ulf Kristersson – who prior to the elections had ruled out any collaboration with the populist – declared himself willing to seek SD's (passive) support in order to break the parliamentary deadlock and form a center-right government with the alliance parties. KD was onboard, but the two other parties refused and ended up supporting the S-Mp government that finally entered office in January 2019, four months after the election.

The center liberal parties' (C and L) support for a left-wing government has driven a wedge right through the bourgeois alliance, and it has altered the basic divisions of the party system. Throughout most of the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first, Swedish politics have been shaped by the conflicts between labor and capital, socialism and capitalism, state and market. Now, the party-political system is increasingly shaped by the conflicts between openness and closure, diversity and cohesion, cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Obviously, this is a gradual and steady change as in so many other European countries, yet exacerbated in Swedish politics by the refugee crisis and its aftermath. It has brought about new divisions in a previously relatively unpoliticized dimension.

It is of course hard to predict how lasting this split of the center-right alliance will be. Developments during the Spring 2019 indicate an ideological divorce on issues of immigration and integration. The Moderates and especially the Christian Democrats have positioned themselves closer to the SD – content, as well as collaboration-wise – while the Liberal and Center parties are torn between their support for the government on 'new left' issues (immigration, diversity, openness) and their proximity with Moderates and Christian Democrats on 'old right' issues (taxation, labor market, privatization, etc.). Such alliances may of course change quickly again, in the increasingly volatile Swedish party system. Less likely to change any time soon, however, is the identification of the right with national preservation and the left with liberal openness, the growing salience of this national-cosmopolitan dimension, and the polarization over it.

### *The re-nationalization of membership?*

The third sign of change relates to the conception of membership. Sweden abolished the remainders of the (largely informal) language test for

citizenship in the 1980s (Szabó 1997). Since then, several commissioned reports have considered the linguistic component of integration and its connection to citizenship, always discarding it as a mandatory naturalization requirement. The normative reason is that it unjustly excludes some groups from full political membership, such as elderly, people with low or no education, illiterates, people with learning disabilities, and others for whom a formal test would be severely disadvantageous. Performance tests for citizenship simply do not match well with the principles of voluntary integration and universal inclusion. The empirical reason is the lack of evidence for the correlation between language testing and efficient integration. According to this causal argument, language tests are too blunt and inefficient an instrument for promoting language proficiency (see SOU 1999: 34 and SOU 2013: 29). Such proficiency, and integration more generally, is better promoted through encouragement and social inclusion, rather than sticks and carrots, the argument goes.

A new policy seems to be under way, however. In January 2019, the new government declared its intention to introduce a language and civics test as part of the naturalization requirements (PM 2019: 10). The Liberal Party has advocated the introduction of a language test since the early 2000s with little success, but now the circumstances seem to be different. The left-green government depends on the support of a small party that pushes for the formalization of (liberal) naturalization requirements. In this concrete respect, the proposed test is a concession to the Liberals. In a more general respect, it also seems to be the result of renewed interest in ‘Swedish values’ and the need for ‘*leitkultur*’ – an explicit public delineation of what mainstream civic culture is. Arguably, the impulse can be traced back to a debate that began after New Year’s Eve 2015/16. From several cities in Sweden (and Europe) came reports of gangs of young men/boys of presumed Afghan and Syrian origin, touching, groping and cornering women in crowded places. The events were rapidly connected with the large inflow of refugees the preceding fall, and publicly construed (by some) as a clash of values: a modern Swedish culture of gender equality and sexual liberation versus an oriental and traditional (Muslim) culture of patriarchy and clan mentality.

Following the New Year’s Eve events of 2015/16, Swedish values have reemerged as a political referent in integration policy. In the yearly political summer gathering in the city of Visby 2016, all party leaders made statements in their speeches on Swedish values and how their relation to integration. The stressed values are fairly generic and universal, however, and typically include the central pillars of liberalism (individual autonomy, tolerance) and democracy (free speech, political equality) in combination with more specific issues such as gender equality, sexual liberation, and social egalitarianism. Although the invoked values are sometimes construed in ways that are particularly Swedish, only the SD has connected them with ethnic or thick cultural traits. The central idea of this increasingly influential way of reasoning is that integration does not happen spontaneously by itself,

as previously believed, but needs to be actively and explicitly guided by the state. Fleshing out the values of membership, albeit vaguely and tentatively, is a way of delineating the pathway to integration – not an attempt to ‘purify’ the nation.

**Conclusion:  
a crisis of values or realities?**

The Swedish policy development after the refugee crisis puts into question the established Swedish model of cosmopolitanism. The challenge is not primarily ideological, in that it did not originate from a populist government or a shift away from established humanitarian values. Rather, the challenge derives from changing perceptions of reality, and more specifically of the causal requirements of refugee reception and integration. In this respect, the Swedish post-refugee crisis is a crisis of realities rather than values, the new reality being a world of potentially unprecedented asylum-seekers, a dysfunctional EU policy under the Dublin regime, and the limited welfare state capacity for refugee accommodation. The values remain the same, but the circumstances have changed, according to the official government narrative.

One could easily argue that this narrative offers a convenient cover-up for a *de facto* nationalist turn in party politics and popular opinion. Blaming the circumstances is a way to save face without making the sacrifices that the model requires. Overall, however, I think this argument underestimates how proudly invested Swedish governments have been in the values associated with humanitarianism, openness, tolerance, and social inclusion. In particular, I think the argument underestimates the overall commitment Swedish governments have made to the ‘win-win theory’ of refugee immigration. On this win-win view, it is not simply morally regrettable to restrict immigration when the numbers of asylum-seekers increase, it is nonsensical: if refugee immigration brings long-term economic and social gains, why would any government voluntarily restrict it? The factual restrictions that have been introduced, then, belie the win-win theory of cosmopolitanism and cast doubt on everyone who defended it. In the Swedish case, that includes all the parties apart from SD, which in this respect has come out as the ‘winner’ of the refugee crisis.

Eventually, the new reality of Swedish immigration policy is likely to affect also the values of immigration policy. This is normally how politics works – reality and values tend to go hand in hand. It is a package deal, and if one changes, the other follows, especially in Sweden where the defense of a moral position has relied so heavily on empirical-causal arguments. We enter a phase of ‘post-postnational’ consensus. The signs of change that I outlined in the previous section are difficult to diagnose with any certainty, of course, but some changes are unlikely to return to the ‘cosmopolitan normality.’ While the party constellations may change and steer immigration policy in a more or less cosmopolitan direction, the crystallization of a new left-right cleavage will construe and politicize a growing number of issues as instances of the conflict between national and cosmopolitan ends. And,

while the proposed civic and language tests may amount to nothing, the growing disbelief in spontaneous integration through encouragement and rights is likely to stick. Above all, the tradeoff between numbers and rights has been normalized in public speech and is unlikely to be reversed in the near future. The return of the progressive dilemma urges politicians to weigh cosmopolitan hospitality against national preservation, and to ‘sell’ their priorities to the voters in a much more direct way than they have been used to. They will be tempted to adjust their values to the new, national reality to make the ‘package deals’ more cohesive and accessible.

## Note

- 1 I would like to thank Björn Östbring and Brigitte Suter for helpful comments on previous drafts of this chapter.

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